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The relationship between racial balance and education was explored. Historical, political, legal, moral, and social-psychological answers in terms of human learning, communication, creativity, and personality dynamics were discussed. On the basis of social-psychological considerations, practical suggestions were recommended. It was concluded that racially balanced education is no panacea. Balanced schools offer the Negro child his best hope for the future, yet they raise special problems of their own and do not in themselves guarantee solutions to the many educational and psychological barriers impeding the Negro American today. Balanced schools are, however, an imperative first step. In simplest terms, the segregated school defeats the Negro child virtually before he begins his educational career. At least the racially balanced school has the potentiality of offering the Negro child and the white child an academic and emotional preparation for tomorrow's interracial world.

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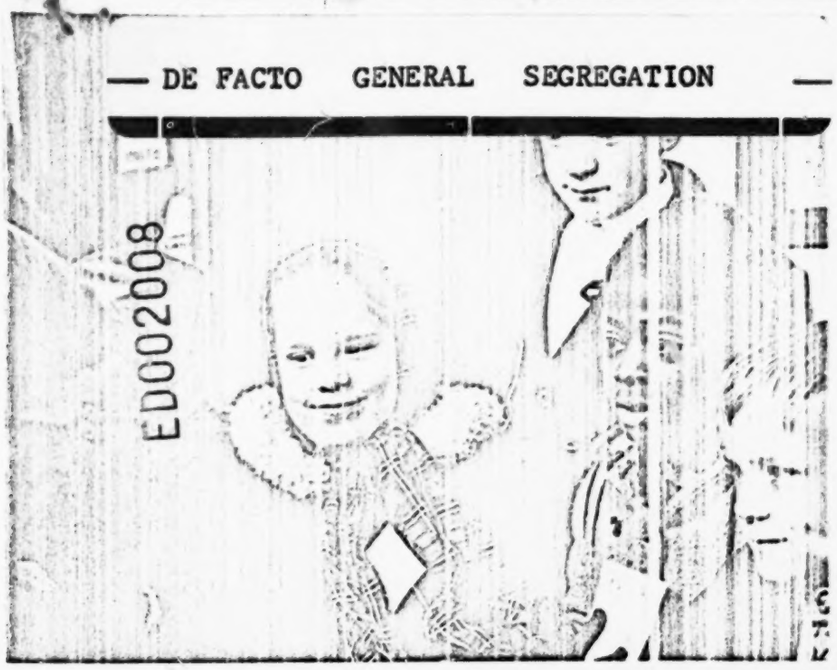

Social Psychology and Racial Balance*

Thomas F. Pettigrew
and
Patricia J. Pajonas

"What's racial balance got to do with education?" recently asked a puzzled school committee member at a public hearing in a northeastern city. "Good schools are good schools," he continued, "it's the quality of teaching that counts. We have schools where almost all the children are Irish, some with almost all Italians, others with Chinese or Jews or what have you. Why are you Negroes so upset over your schools having mostly colored children?"

He peered down through the glare of the television klieg lights at the local Negro leaders who faced him. The mass media covered every word of the proceedings; the overflow crowd packed into the small chamber listened intently for the answers. One School Committee member had long ago stopped listening and had turned the issue of balanced schools into a politically-expedient excuse for racist defiance. But much of the media audience and the crowd in attendance were in as honest bewilderment as the questioning Committee member. Why, indeed, are Negroes so upset over unbalanced schools?

Answers to this query come from many directions. Some are historical. Negroes

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* This article is an extract from a paper entitled "Social Psychological Considerations of Racially-Balanced Schools" due for publication this year by the New York State Education Department in the report of their conference on the state of knowledge about racial integration and education, held March 31, 1964, in New York City. The present article consists chiefly of the summary and conclusions of the arguments advanced in the original paper. All rights reserved.

are the only Americans who ever endured slavery,[1] and whose very skin color activates to this day the stigma associated with that experience. Irish-Americans, Italian-Americans, Chinese-Americans, and Jewish-Americans have all faced group discrimination in the New World; but none has known the degradation of slavery nor still confronts daily discrimination at every turn. Nor have these other ethnic groups suffered from a vast system of legal and extra-legal segregation which in time made separation synonymous with rejection and oppression. Consequently, Negro Americans learned that, for them at least, racially-balanced facilities are necessary if they are to receive anything resembling equal opportunity.

Some of the answers are political and legal. Even in brick and mortar terms, separate facilities for Negroes nearly always mean inferior facilities. Whether in the North or South, political realities mitigate against predominantly Negro schools receiving truly comparable instruction and facilities. In the northeastern school system of the questioning School Committeeman, for example, the primarily Negro schools in the midst of the city's ghetto are typically older, more crowded, and allocate less money per pupil than the average school in the system. Put bluntly, balanced schools are needed to insure the necessary political leverage; many white school officials reveal a strong interest in the education of Negroes only when Negroes are found in the same schools with sufficiently large numbers of whites.[2]

On *de jure* segregation, the Supreme Court of the United States has spoken emphatically. As early as 1873 in Washington, Alexander & Georgetown Railroad Company v. Catherine Brown, the High Court held that separate rail cars for the two races were in themselves discriminatory, regardless of how physically equal they might be. Eighty-one years later, in the famous 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Public School desegregation opinion, the Court returned to this doctrine: "We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

On *de facto* segregation, however, the law is only now being formulated. But the trend may be heading in a similar direction. A recent Illinois state statute prohibits unbalanced schools; and a recent decision of the highest state court of California favored the creation of balanced schools in a case that did not involve prior acts of explicit discrimination by the school board. These laws and decisions do more than clear the path toward racially-integrated education. They also convince many Negroes that their dissatisfaction with segregated schools is both well-founded and worthy of protest action. Legal gains educate both whites who resist and Negroes who insist.

Further reasons for the Negro's concern involve the "American Dream" in its broadest dimensions. The Negro American is totally American; his fourteen generations here have completely immersed him in the culture. Almost two centuries of African colonization schemes for Negroes have failed to budge him; the Communist Party's tireless efforts to exploit his poverty and oppressed status have miserably failed;[3] and even the present Negro revolution aims to join, rather than to destroy, the society it confronts. This basically American orientation means most Negroes have both internalized the American dream of equal opportunity and decided that the highly-valued institution of public education should be the critical focus of the effort to achieve that dream for their children. Moreover, racially-balanced schools are viewed by many Negroes as the only form of public education which can adequately fulfill the dream; for they are convinced that only integrated living begun in the earliest years can ever eradicate racial bigotry.

[1] For documentation of the especially devastating effects of North American slavery, see: S. Elkins, *Slavery*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959; and F. Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas*. New York: Knopf, 1947.

[2] For example, school officials in Washington, D.C. never bothered to examine their Negro students systematically with an organized testing program until racial desegregation was begun in that city in 1954 (Southern Regional Council. "Desegregation and academic achievement," *Report No. L-17*, March 14, 1960).

[3] See: W. Record, *The Negro and the Communist Party*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951.

"What's racial balance got to do with education?" Apart from the historical, political, legal, and moral answers, there are a variety of social psychological answers to the school committee member's blunt query. This paper briefly discusses* these considerations in terms of human learning, communication, creativity, and personality dynamics.

Students need to be taught in environments similar to those in which they will later be required to perform. This is a direct imperative of a basic principle of human learning: *alteration of salient environmental features associated with original learning results in diminished retention and performance*. Since Negroes must perform well in interracial work situations if they are to be occupationally upgraded in the future, it follows that they should be educated in schools which provide interracial learning situations.

A communications analogy with schizophrenic theory highlights the importance of the role schools can play in countering the racist messages still lingering in the larger society—countering not only explicitly in formal instruction, but implicitly in the biracial composition of students, teachers, and administrators. On the one hand, the Negro child hears the "work hard" message: any American with talent and ambition who works hard can be successful, thus anyone who is not successful must not "have what it takes." On the other hand, the Negro child also hears the "know your place" message: any Negro who openly strives to get ahead of white people is too uppity and obviously doesn't know his place. Like the potentially-schizophrenic child whose mother tells him she loves him but acts as if she does not, the Negro child finds himself the victim of a *double-bind*. But many potentially-schizophrenic children in the double-bind never become schizophrenic, in part because they are able "to leave the field," to find consistent guidance and reassurance outside of the home in such places as the school. Likewise, Negro children need "to leave the field," need to find the type of consistent guidance and reassurance only a racially-balanced school can provide.

Too frequently the balanced-school and other educational controversies focus myoptically upon I.Q. and achievement test scores, without full consideration of such higher mental processes as creativity. A brief review of the principal research findings on creativity reveals a series of personal characteristics which must be encouraged and developed: "openness to experience," recognition and acceptance of personal differences, desire for complexity, personal insight, and an independent unwillingness to submit totally to authority. Each of these traits would be difficult for a segregated school to foster, since by its very structure it is a societal symbol of the restriction of experience, the rejection of individuals because of racial differences, the desire for simplicity, the refusal to probe psychologically, and the total submission to authority.

From the perspective of personality dynamics, racially-balanced schools include aspects which are both detrimental and facilitating to Negro performance. These ideas are based on considerable experimental laboratory data, but field evidence directly from the classroom is scarce. One field study in New York City and another in a middle-sized New England city support these laboratory conclusions in general. These two investigations also suggest that the facilitating effects easily outweigh the detrimental influences of biracial situations in effective balanced schools.

Segregationist critics raise the additional issue of psychological comfort. Speaking confidently for Negroes as usual, these critics emphasize only the detrimental forces potentially operating in biracial situations and claim Negroes are happier, healthier, and more comfortable in all-Negro settings. To be sure, there is evidence of tension among many Negro children during the initial stages of integration. But the critical question arises as to *what price comfort?* To suggest that Negro personality problems are best handled by continuing the segregationist practices that are largely responsible for these problems is a curious idea. Lobotomized patients are often more comfortable, too, but they are impaired for life.

Finally, a temporary working definition of "racial balance" is put forward, and a research design for a definitive study of ra-

* The reasoning behind the arguments advanced in the section that follows, which represents the Summary and Conclusions of Dr. Pettigrew's original manuscript, is set forth in detail for the reader in the complete text.—Ed.

Thomas F. Pettigrew is Associate Professor of Social Psychology at Harvard. Excerpts presented here are taken from his talk in December, which was part of the Education Lecture Series. The text of his speech was written in collaboration with Patricia J. Pajonas, a candidate for the Ph.D. in sociology, who is a research assistant in the Laboratory of Social Relations at Harvard.

cial balance is proposed. A number of social psychological considerations lead to a definition of racial balance for the current transitional phase as a school with approximately 20% to 45% of its student body Negro. The proposed research would optimally include twelve schools of specified characteristics. It would be costly, time-consuming research, but simpler designs would not be definitive.

Similar to the practical suggestions made by others concerned with this issue,[4] the following action recommendations lead from these social psychological considerations:

(A) For a host of reasons, racially-balanced education should begin in kindergarten and the first grade.

(B) Biracial schools should have biracial staffs, which include not just Negro teachers but Negro administrators as well.

(C) Negro and white staff members in biracial schools need specialized in-service training in racial concerns. In particular, they need to learn how to deal with and *not avoid* this issue, how to maximize those aspects of the biracial situation which facilitate learning while minimizing those aspects which depress learning.

(D) Contact alone will not necessarily reduce interracial animosity. Indeed, human interaction tends to multiply the trend first established in an institution. It is therefore easier to desegregate a new facility right at the start than an old facility with established norms of racial separation. Since there is a constant turn-over of students, this factor is usually most important for the more permanent teaching staff. Hence, it is sometimes advisable when desegrating an old facility to bring in a sizeable number of new staff members, particularly if there are recalcitrant teachers who need replacing. Moreover, Allport concludes from his review of the research evidence that the contact situation which is most effective in reducing intergroup prejudice is typically characterized by: equal status and treatment accorded both groups, cooperative seeking after common goals, and strong authority support for the contact.[5]

(E) Homogeneous ability groups (the "track" system) must be kept flexible, with frequent and periodic reevaluations. The psychological danger of such a system in biracial schools is that it provides a subtle, but devastating, outlet for prejudice to be acted out in the name of an educational technique. Moreover, ability grouping almost inevitably freezes teachers' expectations as well as the self-images of the children themselves; thus, it is especially dangerous in the early grades.

(F) The school must venture out into its community—community in a broader sense than the immediate neighborhood. Programs need to involve parents not only in the school but also in the wider community. Negro children, especially, need to be introduced into situations where Negroes until recently rarely ventured (e.g., expensive restaurants, as in Samuel Shepard's current "operation dine-out" in St. Louis).

(G) The optimal racial ratio to strive for, at least in the initial stages of desegregation, consists of approximately 20% to 45% Negroes.

(H) Intensive research is urgently needed on all aspects of the racial balancing of schools.

To sum up, racially-balanced education is no panacea. Balanced schools offer the Negro child his best hope for the future; but they raise special problems of their own and do not in themselves guarantee solutions to the many educational and psychological barriers impeding the Negro American today. Balanced schools are, however, an imperative first step. In simplest terms, the segregated school defeats the Negro child virtually before he begins his educational career. At least the racially-balanced school has the *potentiality* of offering the Negro child—and the white child—an academic and emotional preparation for tomorrow's interracial world.

[4] C. J. Klopf and I. A. Laster (Eds.), *Integrating the Urban School.* New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, Bureau of Publications, 1963.

[5] G. W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice.* Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1954, Chapter 16.